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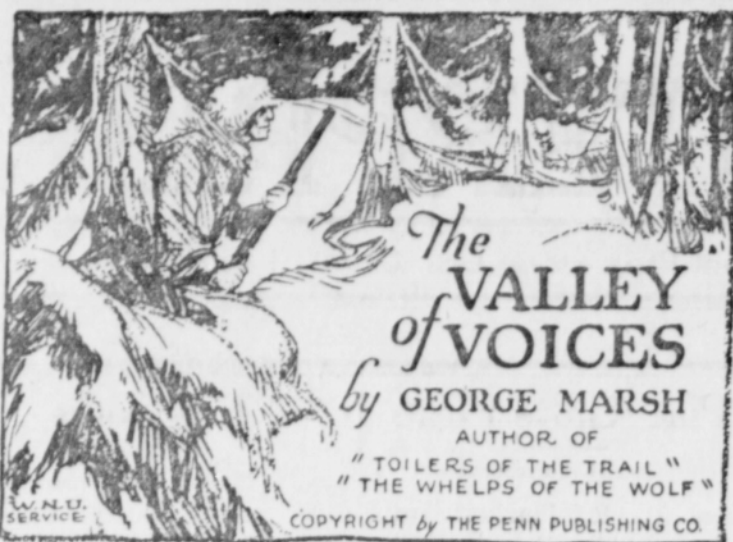
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W. N. U., San Francisco, No. 14-1928



The VALLEY of VOICES

by GEORGE MARSH
AUTHOR OF
"TOILERS OF THE TRAIL"
"THE WHELPS OF THE WOLF"
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CHAPTER XIV—Continued

"He jump on beam from de tree!" Michel pointed to the broken branches of a neighboring spruce.

"That's what happened!" groaned Steele. "He waited for Pete to come up, and dropped on his back. Game old Pete! He gave a good account of himself before he went."

"We not tell de Injun dis," advised David.

"No, but they're stampeded by this time. We can't hope to hold any Portage lake hunters after last night. I guess we're licked."

So, burying his staunch friend in the snow, Steele turned back, bitter with defeat, for his hope of aiding the St. Onges had lessened as the November days wore on.

On their return Steele and the Indians found the camp of the Ojibways already deserted. On a blazed birch was the message:

"We are going up the valley. You have not driven away the Windigo and we have fear to remain."

They crossed the river to their camp, where David, from whom no calamity, however dire, could banish appetite, was speedily cooking breakfast. There, also, they found Little Jacques, shamed of face, for with the return of the others, his courage had revived.

Eating the warm meal which David had cooked, the tired and sleepy men turned into their blankets. In the afternoon David and Steele waked, to learn from Little Jacques that Michel had taken his rifle and ax and left the camp. As they sat by a huge fire, for the trees were snapping with the strengthening frost, like a shadow, the Iroquois slipped back across the river.

"Any sign of our friend?" asked Steele.

"No track on de ridge where we set de beag trap. Wind shift, eet grow cold."

The men ate in silence, and filled their pipes. For a time they sat and smoked, too dejected for conversation.

David had freshened the fire with a birch log and stood holding a blazing stick to his pipe, when he tilted his head. Steele watched the expression of the furrowed features in the freelight slowly shift from mild curiosity to sudden interest.

"You're not going to start us out again tonight, David?" said Steele.

"I hear someth' den," was the low reply. Steele rose and held his breath, ears straining.

Then from the ridge of the fox sets, hardly a half-mile distant, rose a scream.

"By gar! He's at de trap!" And David leaped for his shoes and rifle, and started for the ridge, followed by Steele and Michel.

As they crossed the river, the scream again lifted on the freezing air. The men had stopped to listen to locate the position of the beast, for the ridge was a long one, when, as the cry rose to its climax, it was cut short off—to leave the night again quiet.

"We go easee—no scare heem," cautioned Michel.

They were nearing the first fox-set, and still the voice in the night held its silence. Could the beast be waiting to rush them from cover, like a wounded grizzly, wondered Steele.

Separated for safety, with cocked rifles, they advanced to the bear trap masked in the snow beside the bait.

"What you see, Michel?"

"He bin here, but miss de trap!" muttered the Indian, doubled over in the snow. Steele and David moved up to look at the tracks. The trail led down the ridge toward the second trap. The hopes of the three friends rose. But why was the Thing so silent? Was he waiting to leap on them as he had sprung on the bound?

With rifles loose in the crook of the left arm, for the fingers of the right hand would freeze if exposed, and spread like skirmishers, they stalked the position of the hidden bear trap.

Through the blue shadows, Steele strove to locate the position of the fox-set beyond them. Then the warning arm of the Iroquois held him tense in his tracks. He slipped his right hand from the mitten to the grip of the Mannlicher. What had Michel seen?

As if carved from stone the Indian knelt, rifle leveled, while Steele waited breathless for the explosion. Then to the surprise of the man whose right hand was fast stiffening on his gun grip, Michel suddenly rose to his feet. Joining Michel, where the view was unobstructed, Steele gasped in amazement. There in the snow, by the fox-set crouched a black hulk.

"Shoot, Michel!" he whispered, leveling his Mannlicher.

"No use," came the muttered answer. "Pete, he rest easee—tonight."

"What! He's in the trap?"

"Ah—lah! He nevaire move; an' he face de odder way."

David joined them. "Dat Windigo froze stiff! Dis tam de trap stop hewl queek!" But as they approached, three rifles covered the black shape in the snow.

Steele's heart beat high. Now that the crazed beast with the evil voice lay stiff in death, now that there was hope for Walling River—and for her, the baffled scientist in Steele clamored for the key to the riddle. What breed of beast, mad or normal, could it be?

First at the trap, Michel turned to Steele with a wild oath.

"By gar! Look, look w'at we hunt all dis tam!" And the infuriated Iroquois slashed savagely at the carcass gripped by the jaws of steel, till the knife blade snapped in his hand. Then with a heave he turned over the hairy body with the trap, and Steele stared, dumfounded, into the twisted features, horrible in the grimace of death, of—Pierre!

"Good G—d! Pierre from Ogoke—Lafamme!"

In amazement, David and Steele bent over the distorted face etched with the frenzied despair of the moment when the steel fangs snapped, crushing the bones, and he measured



Michel Had Taken His Rifle and Ax and Left the Camp.

the minutes until the chill of the white death leech his blood. This Thing, stiff in its suit of bear-skin, with the huge feet lashed to the legs—this frozen masquerader, who, from Walling River to the Feather lakes, from the Little Current to the Medicine hills, had filled the tips with fear, had at last paid the price.

"So you de folter dat keel de man at Stoopin' riviere, an' poor ole Pete, ah—lah!" muttered the Ojibwa, examining curiously the hood, framed from the scalp of a huge black bear, and the skinned-out paws, pieced into the great feet which had left the mysterious trail.

At length Steele found his voice. "To think of all that walling and squalling being done by an Indian! What vocal chords! He was a marvel! Must have been trained for it by Lafamme! Poor old Pete! We've squared it for you. How did he kill him, Michel?"

"Shoot heem from de tree, den cut heem wid de knife!"

"How he run on de snow wid dem feet beat me," wondered David.

"He use snowshoe 'til he wan' to make Windigo track. He lose de shoe w'en Pete get hees trail."

Then the stored hate of weeks for the master mind behind this broken tool at their feet—the arch plotter, who, with such subtlety had planned to turn the valley of the lower Walling into "forbidden country" which no hunter dared enter—a land under a taboo, spirit-ridden, shunned; was loosed in Steele.

"That crook at Ogoke shall pay for all this—pay with his skin, with every cent he owns," he stormed. "Give me your hands, you two!"

Slipping off their mitts the three friends gripped over their victim.

"We swear, here and now, that we will run Lafamme and his crowd out of this country, if we stay on the snow until spring. Promise!"

"No," objected David, withdrawing his fist. "He ees for me—de odder for you!"

"Right! He belongs to David—the police can't have him!"

And the three half-frozen men left the thing in the trap and snow-shed back to their camp where they found Little Jacques huddled by the fire, moaning the fate of his misguided friends, who so rashly had followed

the voice of the Windigo to their doom.

"What's the matter Jacques? Think you see ghosts?" asked Steele of the frightened Cree.

"You—you not eat up?" he asked. "You nevaire shoot de gun. I had fear de Windigo get you."

"No, we got him—in the bear trap. In the morning I want you to go up and see him so you can tell the people at Walling River."

"No, no! I weel not look at heem!" protested the little half-breed, his face picturing the horror aroused by Steele's suggestion.

"The Windigo, Jacques, we found to be an old friend of yours, sent by Lafamme to frighten the Indians—Pierre, who was at the post in September. You must have a look at him for yourself before you take the news to St. Onge. In the morning we'll send for all the people in the district to come and see him."

"Pierre, from Ogoke, he mak' all dis trouble?"

"Yes. He won't scare any more hunters in this valley."

CHAPTER XV

In the morning Steele with difficulty persuaded fearful Little Jacques to accompany him to the bear trap on the ridge. The Cree, with much murmuring and many misgivings, cast a hurried look at the twisted features of the thing in the trap and turning, led Steele a mad pace back to camp.

Then Jacques started with his dog-team for Walling River with the news of the victory.

Before dawn, Michael and David had left for the scattered camps at the head of the lake to dispatch dog-runners east, south and west with the word that the dreaded Windigo lay frozen in a bear trap at Portage lake for the eyes of all who would journey there to see.

But what, after all, did this victory—this thwarting of Lafamme's scheme to terrorize and depopulate the valley—mean to him, Steele asked himself as he sat beside his fire of birch logs that late November morning. There was no doubt that the Indians, once they looked at the body of Pierre and learned that the Ogoke trader was at the bottom of it all—had loosed in their country a madman with orders, not only to drive them from their hereditary hunting grounds, but to kill—would be keen for vengeance. There would be no lack of volunteers among the trappers for a campaign against the free-trader. But there would be no help from the government until spring, and the situation at Walling River demanded immediate action. No, there was nothing to do but pull Lafamme's teeth at once, and notify the government later.

But then the defeat of Lafamme did not mean the salvation of the post—far from it. Lascelles could close the post, even in the face of a profitable future, for the loss of the fur canoe had put the place badly in debt to the company. So, with Lafamme eliminated, Denise St. Onge seemed no nearer. Whether he kept the post in operation or not, the inspector would never release her from her promise. The only solution was her father's breaking with Revillon Freres—but would he do it? Would she allow him to, knowing the hopeless alternative he would face?

Then the wind-burned features of the man who sat thinking by the fire contracted with pain as he realized the presumption, the futility, so far as he was concerned, of his solicitude for the future of those at Walling River. Already she had thrust him from her. She had condemned him without hearing. In the end, if they won out for St. Onge, and, owing to what had been told the Revillon people at Montreal, Lascelles dared not close the post, he, Steele, would have her gratitude—her gratitude! when once she had come to him with her heart in her eyes—had vibrated like the string of a violin to his touch, had turned instinctively to him in her despair!

In two days Michel and David returned with hunters from the head of the lake keen for a look at the body of the masquerader who had left a trail of terror throughout the valley of the Walling. And when they saw the thing which had been sent by Lafamme to drive them from their trap-lines to new and strange hunting country in the upper valley where their trade would go to Ogoke, there was a clamor for vengeance. Later when dog teams, from the Little Current to the Medicine hills, had answered the call of runners from Portage lake, Michel marshaled the Ojibways at the trap on the ridge and addressed them dramatically in their native tongue.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Tides in Inland Seas

There are tides in both the Mediterranean sea and the Gulf of Mexico. In the Mediterranean they are so slight as to be almost imperceptible; in the Gulf of Mexico they run from two and a half to four feet. A delta is an alluvial plain formed by a deposit of sand and mud carried down a river. As the stream enters quieter waters the deposit falls to the bottom and increases in area and height until it reaches the surface and is raised by floods and tides above the high-water mark. The delta of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra has an area of 50,000 square miles and that of the Nile is 200 miles wide and 100 miles long. The Mississippi delta, which encroaches at a rate of 200 feet a year, has an area of 12,000 square miles. Great deltas are only found in comparatively tideless seas, because the deposits would not otherwise have a chance of accumulating.

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Depths greater than 200 feet have been reached by divers. Chief Gunner's Mate Frank Criley, U. S. N., broke the record when he attained a record of 288 feet to locate the sunken submarine F-4 in Honolulu harbor. Thirty-five fathoms, equal to a pressure of about 100 pounds, is regarded as the average depth for divers of experience and good physique.

Seek to Rout Pneumonia

Physicians are now studying diligently new serums by which it is hoped to reduce the pneumonia death rate considerably. It is estimated by conservative medical statisticians that in the United States annually 140,000 persons die directly and indirectly from the disease. Heart disease continues, however, to be the principal cause of death.

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